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# MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, December, 1891.

NEIDHART VON REUENTHAL AND  
BERTHOLD STEINMAR VON  
KLINGNAU.

OUR task begins appropriately with a consideration of the times in which these men lived, and the experiences of their respective lives. What we know of NEIDHART's career is derived chiefly from passages of his own works, and from scattered references to him on the part of his contemporaries and of those writing in the next century. WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH, the only poet who mentions him as still alive, says in his 'Willehalm,' 312, 11 ff.:

"Man muoz des sime swerte jehen,  
het ez her Nithart gesehen  
über sinen geubüel tragn,  
er begunde z sinen friunden klagn,"

This bit of innocent raillery ridiculing the poet's habit of calling frequently upon his friends for assistance against his enemies and rivals, bears incidental testimony to his knightly rank. The poet avoided the disagreeable suggestiveness of his first name by calling himself *den von Riuwenthal*. Aside from the market value the title possessed as a kind of trademark to insure the circulation at home and abroad of his poems, the suggestion of nobility contained in the *von* was doubtless agreeable to one who, even when constantly associating with peasants, never forgot the superiority of his own birth. Definite statements of NEIDHART like those contained in 25, 27 and 49.11 (KEINZ) lead critics to agree upon Bavaria as the place in which to seek the poet's home. Although the exact spot where he lived is still a matter of conjecture, the discovery in a document of about 1249 of the *Friedrich in der gazzen* mentioned in 22, and other similar minor identifications, lead KEINZ to conclude that NEIDHART was an inhabitant of the Northern part of the Bavarian Upper Palatinate, in the former county of Sulzbach.

A single mention of his mother as still living (19.50) is the only item of family history that his poems contain, and neither this nor any other facts, as yet discovered, corroborate in the

slightest degree H. HOLLAND's guess that NEIDHART was an illegitimate scion of a noble Bavarian family. His language is that of the early part of the thirteenth century; the allusion, mentioned above, of WOLFRAM belongs approximately to 1220 A. D.; we know that the poet took part in the crusade of 1217-19; the stormy time for Austria spoken of in his sixty-fifth song was probably that occasioned by the invasion of that country in 1226 by the Germans and Bohemians; the visit of the Emperor in Austria sung in 62 and 63 occurred in 1237; and WERNHER DER GÄRTNER (1250) mentions NEIDHART as no longer living: we may, therefore, with KEINZ assume 1180 and 1250 as the probable extreme dates of the man's life.

He seems to have cared very little for politics, and to have taken little active part in the political movements of the day. Absence of offensive partisanship as a lever for his enemies, is a strong argument for those who see in the open insults NEIDHART received, while in Bavaria, from the peasants, in the loss of his house by an incendiary fire, and in the final breach of friendship between the poet and his duke, acts of revenge upon a successful rival in the affections of the young peasant women, and upon one who knew too well how to satirize peasant weaknesses.

In 49.1.2 we learn that the duke deprived the poet of his Bavarian fief, a blow felt keenly because it meant the loss of his rank and consequent right to sign his poems "von Riuwenthal," a formula to whose value I have already alluded. Very likely the fact that NEIDHART's reputation as a poet had already spread to Austria, helped to determine him to go thither at this juncture. His participation in the Austrian crusade, and the circumstance that the Austrian duke FRIEDRICH was just at this time on bad terms with the Bavarian duke, prepared for him a cordial reception in his new home. In 49.16 he mentions with satisfaction the fief at Molk given him by his Austrian patron. Contact with the upper classes of society and the attendant widening of the poet's horizon, make this an important epoch in his career.

With the sketch, as noted above, of the externals of NEIDHART's life, we can only compare a few unsatisfactory details that form the sum total of what we know of BERTHOLD STEINMAR VON KLINGNAU.

R. MEISSNER has presented in succinct form the gist of what has hitherto been discovered in this line in a dissertation of 1886.\* To his results we owe the following résumé of STEINMAR's life. Documentary evidence and allusions in his poems to contemporary events, are our sources of information. In documents of the house of KLINGNAU written from 1253 to 1270 A.D., there is repeated mention of two brothers BERTHOLD and CONRAD STEINMAR, who appear as witnesses. The absence of the title *miles* and the grouping of these names with those of government officials, lead MEISSNER to infer that these men were not of knightly rank, and that they were employés of the government. Both dwelt in the town Klingnau, on the Aar, which, with the neighboring castle, was built by Sir ULRICH VON KLINGNAU in 1240 A.D., and belonged to his descendants. The fact that the town was occupied in 1240, and, later, almost exclusively by government officials, is cited by MEISSNER as another item of probable evidence that the STEINMAR brothers were in government employ. MEISSNER has also discovered mention of a certain BERTOLDUS STEINMAR, *miles de Klingnau*, as drawer of a document dated Sept. 7, 1290; and he regards this man, either the son or nephew of one of the above described brothers, as our poet. The later date of the *miles de Klingnau* is certainly in favor of this identification.

Two passages in STEINMAR's poems contain historical allusions. In MEISSNER's edition, iii, 3 f., is as follows:

“Hab ich gegen ir valschen muot,  
der ich sender diene  
sô geschehe mir niemer guot,  
unt mîleze ich von Wiene  
niemer kômen mit vrônderlichem muote.”

The critics agree in explaining this as referring to Rudolf von Hapsburg's first campaign against king Ottokar of Bohemia. Rudolf began the siege of Vienna, October 18, 1276, and dismissed the estates of the empire in the

following November. But the Swiss troops from his ancestral lands were retained, and our poet, through his connection with WALTHER VON KLINGEN, an intimate friend of Rudolf, remained with the rest. The spring of 1277 is, therefore, the time when these lines were probably written. The words in xii, 4. 4 f.,

“Vil der kalten nahte  
lîden wir ûf dirre vart,  
die der klûnec gen Mîzen vert:  
wê daz si ie sô spaetiu wart!”

show the poet engaged in a campaign with the King against Meissen late in the season, complaining of the cold nights, and regretting that the expedition was not undertaken earlier in the year. A comparison of the various possible historical events here meant, leads to the conclusion that the situation is one of the expeditions made by Rudolf from Erfurt as base of operations against the robber barons in 1289.

This is all we know of the outer life of STEINMAR. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is enough to make MEISSNER's conclusion very acceptable.

Both STEINMAR and NEIDHART were men of knightly rank. Both seem likewise to have been dependent upon a court patron. STEINMAR, however, was a government employé, while NEIDHART was a vassal of his duke. Both seem to have been alike in their aversion to war. STEINMAR expresses in xii, 4. 4 ff., his impatience at the course of things in the campaign against Meissen, and we shall presently hear NEIDHART complaining of the tedium of his crusade.

Turning now to the work of the two men, we note that NEIDHART began as a singer of dance songs intended for a peasant audience, and treated, therefore, themes drawn from the simple, unpretentious lives of the poet's associates. The tone of his early songs is that of the real minnepoet who sings, from love of the art, the sunny side of the life he leads. In place of the court and the lady of rank, we have here the plain life of the village and the charms of peasant beauties. Keen delight in returning summer and the accompanying prospect of gay dances under the linden and on the village green, is the inspiration of poems like Nos. 1, 3, 4, and forms, with variations introducing the girl anxious for the dance, and her mother who

\*BERTOLD STEINMAR VON KLINGNAU und seine Lieder. Paderborn, 1886.

either restrains or encourages her, the groundwork of NEIDHART'S first songs. In spite of his noble birth, the poet seems perfectly satisfied with his peasant surroundings and slight income. His little farm afforded him a comfortable though modest living, and he enjoyed playing the rôle of lion among those whose long ears did not annoy him as long as the contrast was in his favor. As general favorite of the girls, and dreaded rival of the young men, he seems to have prospered until the consequences of his intimacy with Jiutel, the subject of several of his early songs, made an interruption necessary. The resulting state of public opinion in his neighborhood may have helped him in his decision to join the crusade of 1217-1219.

Before passing to his subsequent work, let us compare this first period with the corresponding epoch of STEINMAR'S career. In both we find sincere devotion to an ideal. Both write in the manner of the court minne-poet, and both are skillful in the technique of their work. Each is wise in selecting situations for artistic treatment from the lives of the people he knows. But NEIDHART is ignorant of court life, and sings the song of the *Reien* and the *Tanz*; whereas STEINMAR follows closely the traditions of court minne-poetry, and expresses his complete resignation to the coldness of his mistress and his determination to serve her still, even though she should never reward him. NEIDHART is in the beginning of his career a successful, and STEINMAR a hopeful, lover. NEIDHART'S diction is from the nature of his subject-matter simpler and more direct than that of STEINMAR. Compare in this connection NEIDHART, 4. 1 :

"Uf dem berge und in dem tal  
hebt sich aber der vogeleschal,  
hiuwer als ê  
grüener klê,  
rûme ez, winder : dû tuost wê,"

with STEINMAR, ii. 1 :

"Swenne ich kômen wil von swære,  
sô gedenke ich an ein wip ;  
diu ist schœne und êrebære  
daz ir tugentlicher lip  
hœhet minen senden muot  
als ein edelen valken wilde  
sîn gevidere in lûften tuot,"

Smoothness and correctness of expression

characterize both ; but one sings because he must, the other because he will. Detailed study of the works of both authors corroborates the view that NEIDHART is much the more spontaneous of the two poets. In only one of NEIDHART'S poems ; viz., No. 5, do we find the refrain, a form of verse that STEINMAR uses constantly.

With NEIDHART'S 'Kreuzlieder' written while the author was yet in the east, in the spirit of a man tired of camp life and war, longing for home and friends, we may compare STEINMAR'S greeting (xii) to his mistress, written from the camp of Rudolf von Hapsburg during the campaign against Meissen. NEIDHART'S words to the fictitious *bote*, 24. 29 f. :

"Sage der meisterinne  
den willichichen dienst mîn,  
sî sol diu sîn  
diech von herzen minne  
vîr alle vrûwen hinne vîr.  
ê ich's verklîr  
ê wold ich verkiesen der ich immer teil gewin-  
ne,"

find a parallel in those of STEINMAR, xii, 3 :

"Du solt mîn meie sîn  
unt mîn spilndiu wunne,  
und ich der diener dîn.  
Klar alsam diu sunne  
ist dîn lichtes ougenbrehen :  
da müeze ich in kurzer zit  
mich noch vrêlich inne ersehen  
vrêlicher sunnentac,  
rôse in sîezem touwe  
ich iuch wol gelichen mac,"

The impatience of a poet amid the trials of camp life, find similar expression in NEIDHART, 24 a, 1 :

"Ob sich der bote nû sûme,  
sô wil ich selbe bote sîn  
zen vriunden mîn.  
wir leben alle kûme ;  
daz her ist mêr dan halbez mort.  
hey, wære ich dort !  
bî der wolgetânen læge ich gerne an minem  
rûme,"

and in STEINMAR, xii, 4 :

Êst Ungelîckes sîn  
und an der schiltwahte  
. . . . .  
vil an der kalten nahte  
liden wir ûf dirre vart,  
die der klînee gen Mîzen vert ;  
wê daz si ie sô spaetiu wart !

The cordial reception accorded the returned

crusader, seems to have restored his youth and vivacity, and we find him again to be the leading spirit of the village merry-makings, occupying once more the position of general favorite, which had been lost temporarily through his indiscretion with reference to Jiutel. Smitten this time by the charms of a girl named Friderun, he seems to have intended honorable marriage with her. Unfortunately, however, her mother or stepmother, had conceived other plans and secured the girl's betrothal to a young peasant named Engelmär. The latter's familiarity shown in snatching from Friderun's side the hand-mirror she wore suspended by a chain, according to a custom of the period, is an especial cause of sorrow to NEIDHART from this time henceforth. Whether the mirror was a present from NEIDHART or not, and whatever the degree of intimacy between Friderun and Engelmär before the latter's impudent act of defiance, the invariably fragmentary character of the poet's numerous bitter allusions to the affair, shows plainly that he felt as a keen disappointment the hopelessness of his suit. He now becomes peevish, crabbed and pessimistic in his views, suspicious of his old friends and jealous of almost every young peasant of his acquaintance. The light humor of his previous songs becomes bitter mockery, and the poet appears at a decided disadvantage. The poems written during these years, reflect the increasing moroseness of their author, and his impatience with the life and aims so attractive to him only a short time before. Losing the moral advantage of a dignified bearing, he descends in his growing use of personal sarcasm and open threats to the plane of his enemies. His prevailing tone is that of faultfinding with the wintry weather and of impotent scolding at the wicked peasants. The Fallstaffian extravagance of some of his threats, as in 36, 53 ff.:

"er und etelicher sin geselle  
den ich tanzeut an ir hant ersnelle  
des si gewis, ich slahe in daz sin offen stât ein elle,"

hints at NEIDHART's consciousness of his cap and bells. But he is most of the time too deeply in earnest to remember, with his audience, the Jack Pudding character of the rôle he is playing. In the greater proportion of *Winter*-as compared with *Sommerlieder*, we hear the

wail of a poet who feels bound to love what he hates, and to praise what he at heart despises. With this not very admirable attitude of mind, that of STEINMAR corresponds to some extent in the second and third periods of his career. Unlike NEIDHART, STEINMAR had the courage, as we shall presently see, to take the only honorable course open to a poet in such circumstances. At first STEINMAR was a genuine minnepoet. In unwearying, even if unrewarded, service of his chosen mistress, he found his first duty and the inspiration of his early songs. Poems like No. ii, assuring us that the thought of his lady-love is a talisman for banishing all sadness; that her beauty, honor and virtue give his spirit wings to mount upward like a wild falcon; that she is an honor to womankind and seemed to him, when first he saw her in her loveliness, like an angel from the skies, filling his heart with the joy felt by a soul when winging its way from purgatory to heaven,—are characteristic of STEINMAR in his youth. There is not a shadow of suspicion here that the ideal is Quixotic and not worthy of his best effort. Later his poems betray distrust in the source of his inspiration. While still continuing to sing in the old tone, he clearly sees the absurdity of some of his old ideals. No. x, for instance, especially the refrain:

"So lebe ich in sendem ungemache:  
vor minneschricken muoz ich mich  
tûchen als ein ente sich,  
die snelle valken jagent in einem bache,"

is the work of a man determined to abide by a choice, made long ago, which he now regrets. No. xiii, with its hypothetical refrain:

"Deist mir alles niht ze vil,  
ob si mich noch treesten wil,"

belongs to the same period.

No. ix, 2 expresses manifest dissatisfaction with the artificial sentiment at the bottom of *Frouwendienst* and desire for a *quid pro quo* basis for the author's future singing. Our scanty knowledge of his life does not enable us to follow in detail the change of opinion that separates the first period from the second and third periods of STEINMAR's career. Without doubt he absorbed more or less of the current skepticism in regard to the aims and ideals of the previous century. He also had the courage of his convictions to an extent that

rendered impossible for him continued masquerading under false colors.

The crisis came when a declaration of literary independence was an absolute necessity. In No. i, the author cuts himself aloof once for all from conventional ideas of court propriety in life and letters. Henceforth he is a free lance and seeks the approval and patronage of *Herbst* in a feasting and drinking song, which certainly left in the mind of "Autumn" no doubt as to the sincerity of the poet's literary repentance and resolve to aim, in the future, at more substantial, even if coarser, ideals than those that had hitherto inspired him.

No criticism of this poem should fail to recognize in it the sincere, although rather violent, rejection of the morbid sentiment and extravagant expression, characteristic of the poetry of chivalry. This furnishes the clue to STEINMAR's purpose in the use of such comical figures as that of a pig in a sack, when describing, in a previous minnesong, the agitation of his heart that wants to hie away to its mistress; or that of the duck in the brook that dives to escape the falcon, as does the poet's heart to escape the terrors of love. Many critics see in STEINMAR a well-meaning blunderer who struck false notes when trying to play in tune; to me he seems rather a literary artist of considerable power, in whose hands such grotesque dissonances as those just mentioned, served the definite purpose of contrast. Writers like WILHELM SCHERER seem to take him too seriously and to fail, therefore, utterly in appreciation of the poet's humor.

The other poems of the "reconstruction" period including No. v, which discusses the untrustworthiness of night watchmen in affairs of love; and No. viii, a clever though rather broad caricature of the classic *Tagelied*, are among the best productions of STEINMAR. His success here is due to the fact that he is now once more loyal to his convictions, and content to be simply STEINMAR, the *bon vivant*, who reports what he sees. Although his range is narrow, his vision is clear.

NEIDHART never relinquished his old position, and after the crisis that transferred him to Austria, he still sang *Reien-* and *Tanzlieder* with a decided preponderance of the latter.

In Austria as in Bavaria, he succeeded in antagonizing the peasants of his vicinity. *Trutzstrophén* composed by the latter, some of which have come down to us, are proof that no love was lost between the poet and the butts of his ridicule. Thus NEIDHART is at the end of his career what he was at the beginning, after due deduction has been made for his loss of freshness and spontaneity, and for his increased attention to form. NEIDHART is from the start a poet of *nidere minne*; STEINMAR begins as a court minnepoet, and, after an intermediate state of half-hearted clinging to his youthful ideals, develops into an enthusiastic singer of *nidere minne*. In NEIDHART's best *Natureingängen*, we have the record of direct and loving observation of nature; STEINMAR never rises above the conventional use of ready-made formulas in his natural descriptions. STEINMAR's seventh song with its vigorous expression of the poet's understanding with the *dirne diu nâch krûte gât* (vii, 1. 5) and its allusion to the argus-eyed mother to be eluded, is the equal of any written by NEIDHART upon a similar theme. The troublesome guardian who hides the young woman's clothes when she wishes to hurry away to the dance, was borrowed by both NEIDHART and STEINMAR from the folksong. NEIDHART becomes less free in the use of poetic form as he proceeds, whereas the reverse process is observable in STEINMAR. NEIDHART's range of ideas is much broader than that of his successor; but the satire of STEINMAR cuts like a steel blade, while that of NEIDHART bruises like a club. Their points of difference are largely those of nationality; their resemblances are characteristic of the single intellectual current in which both men moved.

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#### MORE NOTES ON AMERICAN PRO- NUNCIATION.<sup>1</sup>

To my third circular, sent out in behalf of the Phonetic Section of the MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, I have received about 160 responses. This number is not large enough to

<sup>1</sup> See MOD. LANG. NOTES, vi, 2, pp. 41-42.